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PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Embassy Condemns Harmful Political Rhetoric

As Nigeria looks ahead to the February 2015 general elections, the United States strongly supports a free, transparent, credible, inclusive, and non-violent electoral process. We are deeply troubled by Governor Ibrahim Shehu Shema of Katsina State's recent statements calling for the killing of the "cockroaches of politics." The rhetorical threat of violence undermines the democratic process and is utterly unacceptable in a democratic society. The United States reiterates its call upon all Nigerians to refrain from advocating, fomenting, or condoning violence before, during, or after the elections.

Participants in the electoral process must demonstrate passion for their convictions and beliefs in a manner that shows respect for opposing differences. The Nigerian Constitution itself states it is the duty of every citizen to "respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of citizens to live in unity and harmony." Language that threatens or incites violence short-circuits the democratic process. All Nigerians must be free to voice their opinions and participate in the electoral process without fear of physical retribution. Political parties, elected leaders, and candidates for office have a special obligation to uphold these democratic precepts.

The United States remains committed to working with Nigeria to strengthen its democratic institutions in the years to come. A peaceful election in February 2015 will constitute a major step toward reaching that goal.

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Relevant information about U.S. policies and programs in Nigeria can be found on our websites:
<http://nigeria.usembassy.gov> and <http://www.usaid.gov/ng>.

